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PITUOPHIS CATENIFER DESERTICOLA (Great Basin Gophersnake). PREDATION

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PITUOPHIS CATENIFER DESERTICOLA (Great Basin Gophersnake). **PREDATION.** A variety of taxa have been observed to prey upon *Pituophis catenifer*, including mammals, birds-of-prey, and other snakes (Ernst and Ernst 2003. Snakes of the Unied States and Canada. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C. 668 pp.). Here, we describe an unusual two-day observation of predation on a mature Great Basin Gophersnake by a Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*).

The observation took place in Jones Canyon, Utah, USA, on the grounds of the Jones Hole National Fish Hatchery (JHNFH). Jones Creek emanates from springs at the head of Jones Canyon on hatchery grounds, and flows north to south 6.4 km to the Green River, approximately paralleling the Utah-Colorado border. The stream runs for ca. 0.3 km through a concrete channel across hatchery property before exiting into Dinosaur National Monument. The stream forms a pool at the end of the channel, which is cordoned off from public access by a 2 m high chain link fence. All insects and small wildlife species that fall into the channel are swept into this pool. The hatchery provides a plentiful supply of trout for the stream (primarily *S. trutta, Oncorhynchus mykiss,* and *O. clarki*) through escapes and planned releases. Numerous trout, many large, congregate in this pool, where they are protected from angling and are clearly visible. We have frequently observed snakes of various species basking atop the concrete walls of the channel. Through being startled or other accident, they may drop into the channel and are swept downstream to the pool. Partial bodies of snakes were observed on the bottom of the pool.

On 2 May 2006 the posterior portion of an adult *P. c. deserticola* was observed streaming from the mouth of a large (total length ca. 60 cm) *S. trutta*, the largest trout observed in the pool at the time. The visible length of the snake was approximately the same length as the fish carrying it and the diameter of the snake at the fish's mouth was ca. 2.5 cm. We estimate that the total length of the snake was ca. 90 cm. On the following day, the fish carrying the snake remained clearly visible throughout the day, with no readily apparent changes from the previous day. However, on 4 May 2006 there was no fish carrying a snake in the pool. We do not know if the snake was disgorged, swallowed, or if the fish vacated the pool. No whole or partial remnants of the snake were visible in the pool, only the portions of smaller snakes that were in the pool when observations began. To our knowledge, this is the first account of a Brown Trout consuming a mature *P. catenifer deserticola*.

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